

## Then and Now...



When Arthur Brown tolls the bells at the New Hampshire Veterans Home Memorial Day services each year, he travels back in time to March 19, 1945. Brown was a young U.S. Navy Gunner's Mate aboard the U.S.S. Bullard, a destroyer that was assigned to protect the aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Franklin.

His recollections are vivid and emotional: "Early in the morning—around 6:00 AM—a Japanese kamikaze pilot got through our screen and dove into the aft elevator of the Franklin. There were 120 aircraft in there—loaded with fuel and bombs for the day's mission. The Franklin exploded into flames.

It was an inferno. Some of the crew were blown off the ship by the impact and some jumped in the ocean to escape the fires. We kept screaming, 'Don't jump, don't jump' because we knew that they'd either drown or the sharks would get them. During battle, a ship cannot stop to pick up sailors in the water; if we did, we'd be sitting ducks for enemy planes."



When the attack was over, the crew from Brown's ship helped bury 658 men at sea. Brown himself couldn't leave his gun, as he had to fend off continual Japanese attacks for three days!

Arthur Brown earned nine major battle stars for his service in World War II's Pacific Theatre from 1943 through 1945. He and his wife Nan volunteer at the New Hampshire Veterans Home Memorial Day services, which will be held this year on Monday, May 28. Arthur and Nan are retired and live in Gilmanton, NH. They also

volunteer at the Veterans Hospital in Manchester.

He says, "About 2,500 World War II veterans die each day. It's a great tribute to those who gave their lives for our country to remember and share their stories."

*Photos:*

**Top left**, Arthur Brown in September 1944, when his ship, the USS Bullard (DD660) was in San Francisco for an overhaul.

**Left**, the USS Franklin, afire and listing after the attack (photo courtesy of Steve Whitby; Official U.S. Navy photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives). Brown's ship, the Bullard (not shown in this photo), was beside the Franklin when she listed over—part of the Franklin's flight deck crushed some of the Bullard's superstructure and Brown had to jump from his gun to the next deck or be hit.

**Above**, Arthur Brown at the 2006 Veterans Day remembrance at the New Hampshire Veterans Cemetery.